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PRESS RELEASE

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USAID SMALL BUSINESS EXPANSION PROJECT LAUNCHES IN PELAGONIJA REGION

On November 7th, in v. Krklino, Bitola, USAID launched its Small Business Expansion Project in the Pelagonija Region. The project's goal is to work in collaboration with the private sector and local government institutions to drive regional and local economic development, and in Pelagonija, it will focus on agro-processing, rural tourism, and light manufacturing, as well as design and printing services and artisanal work as main drivers of the local economy.

"A big part of this project's approach to local economic development, especially in the Pelagonija region, is identifying and supporting initiatives that stimulate large and small enterprises to work together," said Deputy Chief of Mission Brian Aggeler. "New market opportunities for local firms are created when a larger company purchases components, materials or services locally. These linkages can also create channels that allow small, local businesses to learn from their business partners."

At the event, USAID announced the commencement of the Pelagonija LEADER activity, implemented in cooperation with the Regional Development Center of Pelagonija. The main focus of the Pelagonija Leader activity is to develop a sustainable forum for public-private dialog geared towards rural development. At the event, USAID announced strategic partnerships with other key stakeholders from the region, including the, mayors, Local Economic Development offices, private sector firms, financial institutions, to coordinate activities to identify economic opportunities and leverage resources for the benefit of small and micro enterprises.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The USAID Small Business Expansion Project will initially focus on the Pelagonija and Polog regions, engaging business leaders, local government and other institutions to identify market opportunities for growth and job creation, upgrading the capacity of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to respond to new market opportunities and grow, and strengthening the capacity of business service providers to better identify and serve the needs of MSMEs.

The American people, through USAID, have invested over \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is working with the people of Macedonia to create jobs, strengthen democratic institutions and practices, enhance integrated education, and prepare students for the workforce. These initiatives improve the quality of life and support Macedonia's transition to a stable and prosperous democracy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov> and USAID FB page <http://www.facebook.com/USAIDMacedonia>